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ABSTRACT

Decentralized counseling was a foremost consideration of college administrators during the planning of the first campus of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (JSRCC). However, since the college opened in September of 1973, a myriad of problems have developed which must be solved if a successful program of decentralized counseling is to be achieved. This document explores these problems and their solutions. Results of a preliminary survey of the attitudes of JSRCC administrators, faculty, counselors, and students towards a decentralized counseling system are reported. Also included are the results of a survey of current practices and innovations in counseling at selected two- and four-year colleges and an examination of related educational research. The author concludes that decentralized counseling helps maximize a student's college experience and is one method that achieves a modicum of success in bridging the existing gap between an institution's personnel and instructional functions. A postscriptual report discusses the status of counseling services at JSRCC one year after this study was undertaken and offers suggestions for further program modification, fund utilization, and staff development. Organizational charts and the survey forms are provided, and a bibliography is appended. (Author/JS)

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DECENTRALIZED COUNSELING

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Lillian Amburgey
J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
September, 1973

JC 750 427

DECENTRALIZED COUNSELING

I. PROJECT OUTLINE

A. First quarter (Statement of the problem)

1. A decentralized counseling approach to student services is preferred by J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College because it provides:

   a. Easy access to counselors by students
   b. Frequent contact between counselors and other division faculty
   c. Increased opportunity for counselor involvement in schedule planning, curricular offerings, and its vocational implications
   e. Earlier identification of students who need help with study skills and social or emotional admustment

2. Background study leading to adoption of this approach

3. Procedures for counseling students in this decentralized system

4. Attitudes of administration, faculty, counselors and students towards this type of organization, by means of a survey made of J.Sargeant Reynolds Community College personnel

5. Staffing

6. Budget

7. Problems in the student services division which have arisen as a result of the decentralization of counseling

B. Second quarter

1. Current practices and innovations in counseling procedures in two-year and four-year colleges

2. Decentralization programs in existence --their success or failure, with reasons for each

C. Third-quarter

1. Suggested approach to decentralized counseling, modified to solve the existing problems at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

The President of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Dr. J. Wade Gilley, and the Provost, Dr. Randall Edwards, paved the way for a new student personnel administrative pattern when their philosophy statement for student services was issued in 1973:

> "J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College is committed to creating a learning climate in which the greatest possible development of potential and fulfillment can take place.....Achievement of even a modicum of sucess in creating a new kind of learning setting will require a departure from traditional student personnel policies and practices.
>
> A decentralized counseling approach is preferred because it provides: Easy access to counselors by students; frequent contact between counselors and other division faculty; increased opportunity for counselor involvement in schedule planning, curricular offerings, and its vocational implications; earlier indentification of students who need help with study skills and social or emotional adjustment."

The staff of counselors, academically trained, with experience gained through the public school systems or a college practicum has been both excited and threatened with assignments to an academic division rather than a traditional counseling center.

In the two short months since the college opened in September of 1973, a myriad of problems have developed which must be solved if a successful program of decentralized counseling is to be achieved. These problems and their solutions will provide the material for this study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"In the beginning" in the Spring of 1973 when the creation of a student services division at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College was a priority decision for the President and Provost of the first campus, decentralized counseling was foremost in their consideration of the organization and administration of counseling services.

Both administrators had come to J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College from colleges with centralized systems of counseling, where they had encountered problems such as: 1) a rift between faculty and counseling; 2) counselors far removed from "the action;" 3) students unwilling to seek out a counselor in some distant location; 4) counselors not being sufficiently knowledgeable in all curricula; etc.

There may have been another influential factor in this structural design. Each administrator was aware of new and innovative approaches to student personnel work, particularly research done by O'Banion, Harvey, Blocker and others in this area of decentralized counseling.

The Dean of Student Services was hired with the knowledge that he would adopt a system of counseling services in line with the philosophy of the administration. The new Dean had previously been employed in the Florida Community College System, with influence and experience obtained from Miami-Dade Junior College and Santa Fe Junior College whose new practices in student services organization and administration have become nationally known.

The success of the few colleges in Florida practicing the decentralized approach to counseling was sufficient to justify staffing in this direction.

O'Banion in "Student Development Programs in the Community College," has stated, "It is sad to see a new staff member attempt to institute in his community college what he has .... learned in another institution, without taking into consideration the matter of institutional readiness for his idea."

It follows that the five counselors were briefed on the new concept of counseling prior to accepting a contract, and all agreed that the idea was an exciting and challenging one for the new college. The staff was also hired with expertise in the academic areas to be served: Business Technology, Allied Health, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Science, and Developmental Studies.

The original and first campus of the college plant was in the hands of the architect and construction engineers when staff members were employed. Because of delays in construction, a large furniture warehouse was acquired to serve as a temporary campus. This building was easily adapted to the Student Services Philosophy, since there were five floors and five divisions, and placing a separate division on each floor with its counselor became a reality.

The Admissions and Records Office procedures involved in setting up a de-centralization of records became a colossal endeavor. It was decided that each division should have a filing system for student records, which meant that each application, health form, transcript, etc., had to be duplicated and forwarded to a division. The counselor then set up a record-keeping system to be used by all in the division. Work-study students were assigned to the counselor to assist with the clerical work.

The Fall quarter of 1973 opened with approximately 2800 students, who had to be admitted, registered, and placed in classes. Inasmuch as there was little time for in-service training, faculty and counselors became "generalists" rather than specialists in every program to process the multitudes.

The placement errors, although inadvertent, necessitated a change in admissions procedures for the following quarter with counselors, faculty, advisors, and divisional chairmen directing students into their desired programs and classes within the division.

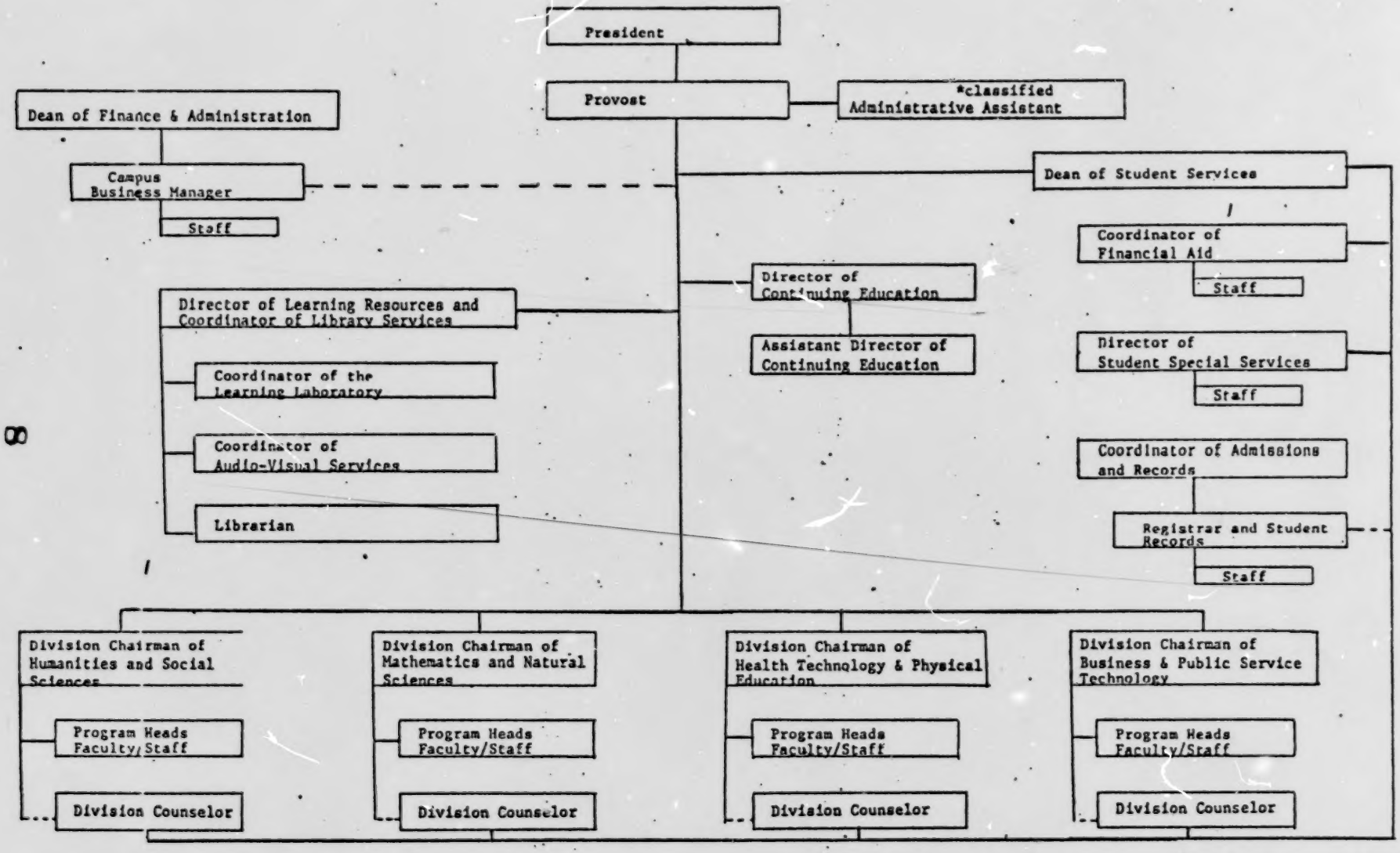
The physical plant of the present campus uses the "open classroom." Partitions between "rooms" are approximately six feet high and six feet wide, with the noise level surprisingly low. Privacy, however, is at a minimum, and counseling has become program advising to a large extent, simply because facilities prevent an exchange of confidences.

During a student's first quarter with the college, he is assigned to a faculty advisor in his program. This relieves the counselor of some academic advising. The assignment of advisees and advisors is the responsibility of the divisional counselor, together with transcript evaluation, transfer information, occupational information, a source for referrals to outside agencies, "keeper" of the student records, a resource for telephone inquiries, group facilitator, professor of Orientation and Psychology, recruiter at area high schools, and occassionally personal counselor. The community college counselor is "all things to all people."

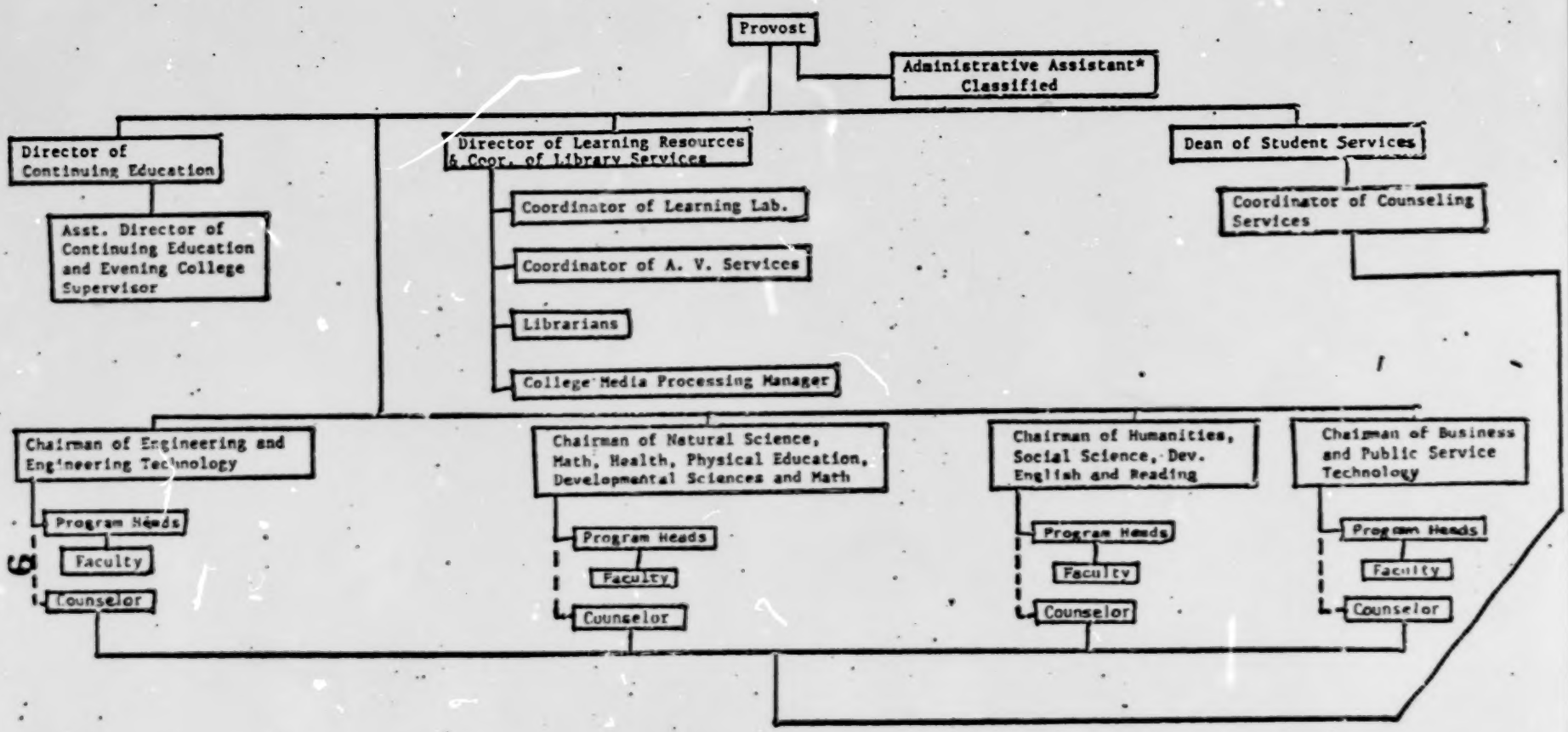
There will be a new organizational structure of student services at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College for 1974 as diagrammed in figures I and II, showing a different relationship with the Student Services Division counselors to the Divisional Chairmen.

Counselors have been confused and frustrated with their divided loyalties to the "college," the Coordinator of Counselors, and their Division Chairmen. A space is provided for the counselor on each floor with his division faculty easily accessible to students, faculty and the administration.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS OF J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE



RECOMMENDED PARIAM ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN



This can be a handicap as well since there is no way nor time for reading professional material, planning innovative programs, previewing audio-visual materials, and sometimes just "thinking."

In preparation for this paper a survey form was issued to the administration, Division Chairmen, faculty, counselors and students with the following results:

	Replies	
	Positive	Negative
60 students surveyed	10	1
7 faculty	6	1
5 counselors	3	2
3 coordinators	1	2
4 division chairmen	4	0
4 administrators (Dean of Students, Provost, Dean of Curriculum Development, President)	4	0

Some comments and attitudes towards this type of organization would be of interest to those evaluating this existing program - from students who favored a decentralized system:

1. A counselor should understand your major.
2. I enjoy the counselor being in the division. There is a feeling or personalization.
3. It seems more like a grass-roots agency rather than an administrative one. This generates more of a feeling of trust.
4. It is easier to get in touch with your counselor.
5. It seems to be working O.K.
6. The counselor in the division would allow for more personal contact and be able to counsel more wisely than one in a central location who did not know the individual as well.
7. The counselor in a division knows more about the courses and requirements of a particular division than one in a general center.

TO: Staff members and students of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

FROM: Lillian Amburgey

DATE: November 8, 1973

RE: Decentralized Counseling

As a project for a graduate class at VPI&SU, I am conducting research in decentralized counseling. Would you be good enough to answer the questions below and return this form to me at your earliest convenience?

1. Which do you prefer: A counseling center, or a decentralized system with counselors placed within divisions?

2. Give the reasons for your preference.

3. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of our decentralized System?

From the Faculty:

1. Where Occupational-Technical programs are an important part of the college, it is necessary that counselors develop a rapport with students and faculty of any program with which they become affiliated. A counseling center would disrupt this rapport.
2. Students, faculty and counselors form a more closely allied group - more a sense of togetherness.
3. The counselor is more efficient in discharging his or her duties by virtue of understanding divisional goals.
4. Faculty members have better understanding of the counselor's roles and duties.
5. Counselors and counselees have the same sense of "belonging" in a program.

From the Coordinators:

1. Minimizes congestion, is more flexible, better usage of facilities, and permits more individuality.

From the Administration:

1. Services to students can be more profitable, if counselors are with students, not isolated in a Center.
2. Because the lines of communication have been open, a close cooperation between all has been created.
3. A harmonious relationship has developed between faculty and counselors because each has a proper understanding of the others' roles.
4. This system allows for a "team" approach - counselors, faculty, administration
5. Allows an opportunity for counselors to broaden their knowledge of program intricacies in an academic division.

There were likewise some negative comments:

1. There has been no time to evaluate this system, so suggestions for improvement are not available now.
2. Duties, functions and office location of counselors should be arranged with

the Division Chairmen, not the Dean of Student Services nor the Coordinator of Counselors.

3. An attempt should not be made to equate the duties of each counselor from division to division. Counselors are then forced to struggle with priorities that conflict with the achievement of other divisional goals.
4. The Coordinator of Counselors and others in administration must be cognizant of the diversity of divisions and allow Division Chairmen greater participation or say regarding the counselor's role in helping meet the goals of the division.
5. Separate job descriptions for each counselor would go a long way in helping to solve the problems that arise when attempting to implement a decentralized counseling plan with centralized control.
6. Counselors should have a definite accountability to the Division Chairmen in performance of his/her activities.
7. A counseling center with a number of counselors having a wide scope of interests would be of value to students who could just walk in for advice and see anyone on duty.
8. If the counseling center is available in a location close to the entrance into the college, perhaps it would meet the needs of students who may never find their way to a counselor.
9. Program planning and placement are done most efficiently in academic divisions, but counseling and other student services activities could better be handled in a counseling center.

10. A counseling center could take care of all services of counseling, including walk-ins, testing, vocational information, transfer courses, etc. The divisions might have highly specialized "teacher-counselors" to act as advisors and assist counselors in the center with their expertise in such specialized fields.
11. A counseling center would equalize the loads of students to be served by each counselor. Some divisions are much larger than others, which makes the counseling work load much greater for some than for others.
12. Counselors should be advisors as well as counselors to free professors for teaching.

With most parties involved backing the new concept, as evidenced through the survey, the problems obviously are administrative, based on misunderstandings, frustrations, and a confusion of roles played by counselors in relation to the "college" and to their respective divisions.

The paper work is a monumental task consuming much time and effort in setting up the Division with the Division Chairman. As has already been stated, the establishment of the record systems was demanding.

The teaching assignments and counseling of "walk-in" students resulted in reduced time within the division.

Registration activities which last for at least three weeks out of a ten weeks period take more time from counseling duties, such as personal counseling, career guidance, vocational measurements, contacts with faculty members, visits into the community resources, personal growth through further education and training.

Students now view the counselors as academic advisors, teachers, file clerks, registrars, but not as a counselor to whom to turn for problem solving.

A limited Student Services budget did not allow for the purchase of "tools" with which to create new activities nor to attend a variety of pertinent meetings.

No esprit de corps exists among members of the counseling staff. The distances between locations prohibits exchanges of ideas and/or conversation other than through memorandums or phone calls, and the usual staff meetings.

Neither administrators nor counselors themselves really know who or what they are to the many they serve. A recent classified advertising section of the Richmond Times-Dispatch ran the following ads, all in one day:

1. Employment counselor desired - call us.
2. Counselors needed immediately to work in a health spa.
3. Counselor - $7500. No experience necessary.
4. Counselor associate wanted - desire mature, ex-teacher.
5. Agency counselor to $250. a week - help people - guide people - will give top training..

A Division Chairman, in response to the survey stated:

"Although I believe no person should or could serve two masters, we have experienced problems with the present system, since it is debatable whether our system is completely decentralized ..... Our system appears to have a decentralized function with centralized authority and control .... It must be understood that counseling duties cannot be equated from division to division. No two divisions are alike - hence counseling duties are not necessarily the same.

Counselors and division chairmen must be allowed greater opportunity for coordinating plans and procedures that will maximize the efficiency of the divisional functions..... One suggestion would be to establish separate job descriptions for the counselors as their roles reflect dissimilarities."

The problems discussed are not insurmountable, and can be resolved with better communication between all concerned, and with greater flexibility to change, if "a better mousetrap" can be achieved through another route.

CURRENT PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS

In the Fall of 1973, Joseph Katz, issue editor of Jossey-Bass, Inc., of Washington, D.C., received a letter from Kent E. Robinson, Director of outpatient services for The Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Baltimore, stating:

> As this letter is written, there are many signs that health, counseling, and psychiatric services, as well as other student personnel services, are seriously threatened in scores of colleges and universities.[1]

The letter continued as he described some of the actions taken by colleges and universities to close-out and/or integrate their student personnel services with other divisions within the institutions:

> The University of Wisconsin at Madison has just closed its entire counseling service. Some institutions have moved counseling into their academic program and The University of Utah has combined it with mental health services because of budgetary considerations.
>
> The governing body of The State Colleges and Universities in Oregon has undertaken a year-long study to find the best way to reduce counseling services provided to students. In California, the budgets of all counseling and student health services in state colleges and universities have been reduced.[2]

This appears a "revolting development," in view of the fact that as early as 1952 Humphrey, chairman of the Student Personnel Committee of the American Association of Junior Colleges, voiced concern about the poor state of personnel services programs in the community colleges; and in 1960, Leland L. Medsker wrote of the Progress and Prospect of The Junior College. He stated that "the counseling programs in many institutions were inadequate."[3] The view then prevailed (and still does in some schools) that "when a student could be assisted in arranging a program of classes which met his personal desires and also met requirements of transfer to a senior college, the major task of counseling had been fulfilled."[4]

Through the years apparently student personnel services have not progressed sufficiently, and they seem destined for a bleak future or complete annihilation. Much research by many, however, during these last fourteen years has resulted in a number of innovative and exciting approaches to counseling and other services designed to help students with their occupational preference, their choice of the next higher institution, or solving personal problems which may be a hindrance to academic achievement.

Burton Clark, 1960, wrote that "much attention needed to be given in the beginning to work done on the college rather than to work done by it."[5] The processing of students by a new college must necessarily involve admittance, registration, and assignment to a curriculum and/or classes. In the early organization of a college, these procedures usually take precedence over the upgrading of student services.

Completed in 1965, The Carnegie Study, sponsored by the American Association of Junior Colleges and directed and guided by Max Raines and T.R. McConnell, appraised the development of junior college student personnel programs. Among the recommendations for improvement was a suggestion, "that by 1970 there should be a restudy of junior college student personnel programs to measure improvements."[6] A year-long study by the Esso Education Foundation in 1971 resulted in a preliminary report of the current status of student personnel work, and identified some trends in organizational patterns.

Jane Matson, 1972, reviewed this study in a "Perspective on Student Personnel Services" for the Junior College Journal. Her analysis, based on responses provided by 589 colleges, described the characteristics of personnel administrators, their fields of highest degree, budget and organization, full time assignment of staff, extensive services, decentralization of services, and major problems faced in implementing student personnel programs.

Of interest was her investigation of the advisability of decentralizing student personnel services to increase accessibility to students and faculty:

> Of the 589 colleges, 37 percent reported that some area of student personnel services had been decentralized ....but administrative control is generally retained in the chief student personnel administrator's hands. In more than two-thirds of the colleges where decentralization has occurred, it was primarily effected through physical location of the service rather than a change in the administrative responsibility.[7]

Decentralization of counseling activities within the community colleges is not really a new idea. In tracing the Community College Movement, Ralph Fields (1962) detailed the establishment of Orange County Community College in Middletown, New York:

> The student personnel program of the community college might best be described as being decentralized. The responsibility under this system does not rest with a single office. All members of the faculty and the administrative staff as well are involved in the program.[8]
>
> The college has a counseling center staffed with psychologists to handle referrals from the faculty counselors and to do psychometric testing. Assistance in educational and vocational counseling is available. Placement is handled in the office of student activities.[9]

Orange County Community College called their plan decentralized counseling, but literally meant faculty advising, as students were assigned to members of the staff upon admittance who served as counselors during their enrollment at the college.

Many systems of decentralization have been utilized by community colleges, and much has been written, both pro and con, concerning the merits of the centralized versus the decentralized organizational structure. Research uncovered varied comments which confuse as well as intrigue the administrator searching for an ideal plan of operation.

Blocker, 1966, emphasizes a new approach to student personnel services for occupational education, and describes a tri-level concept of guidance

services developed by Richard C. Richardson:

> The first level is that done by teaching faculty members; the second level is that provided by the professional counselor; the third level is that provided by specialists whose functions might be admissions, record-keeping, placement, financial-aid, follow-up, and student activities.
>
> Essential to this concept is assignment of professional counselors to the teaching divisions as opposed to retaining them in a central pool.[10]

Charles Collins, 1967, had a humorous comment:

> The ultimate of complete centralization is a traffic jam. All may be within shouting distance of each other, but the communication required for unsnarling is likely to have a snarling tone to it.
>
> The nature of the student personnel facilities and their geographic pattern will carry an implicit, perhaps unconscious, yet loud message to the students, to the faculty, and to the student personnel workers themselves. If student personnel is housed in the administration center, the message is 'student personnel is part of administration.' If the counselors are isolated in a warren of cubicles to which admission is controlled, the message is 'that is where you go to have your psyche fixed.' .... True,an ant hill is centralized, but it is also very crowded and takes the totalitarian control of ants to keep the traffic flowing properly and to make the whole system work."[11]

James Harvey, 1967, wrote of the counseling approach at Harper College in Chicago:

> The counseling program employs a decentralized approach with counselors in the divisions throughout the college. The counselors will, however, develop a counseling-placement center to serve as a center for professional stimulation, a testing center, and as a place for group counseling. The counseling staff can be brought together for in-service training programs, case conferences, research and other professional activities. Counseling offices have been developed with two-way vision windows and sound hookups for observation of counseling in progress. There will also be a lounge for team counseling and experiments in new counseling approaches. The vocational library, financial aid and placement will be there also.
>
> Counseling will use visual terminals and a computer in the counseling process. Data will include student records,four-year college graduation requirements, test norms, expectancy tables, and any data of aid to the counselor.[12]

Mr. Harvey believes that while this program might cost more, the quality of the counseling program is more than worth the expense involved.

Blocker and Richardson, 1968, wrote an article for the Junior College Journal in which they refer to Raines' study of the development of student personnel programs. "The mere addition of personnel and money will not guarantee improvement. Colleges need to consider a fundamental re-appraisal of the roles of counselors, faculty and division chairmen to the end of improving guidance services for individual students."13

The divisional counselor, they say,"can make an important contribution to the concept that teaching and guidance are inexorably intertwined and mutually dependent functions, both of which are essential to the education of students."14

Centralization of student personnel services was highly regarded by Thomas O'Connell, 1968, as he replied to the question: Where should the guidance facilities be located for maximum efficiency? "At a central point in the flow of student traffic, preferably in the same complex with the administrative offices. Our emphasis is on bringing administrative and guidance functions together, on having the guidance offices be the hub for guidance work which goes on primarily in faculty offices."15

O'Banion, 1971, surveyed new directions in community college student personnel programs, and described an unusual plan developed by the Portland, Oregon Community College for the student personnel staff. Their concept is that the "college is establishing an educational shopping center. Counselors are located wherever students are likely to congregate: the library, the study areas, faculty office areas. Desks are located in relatively open fashion, and students are encouraged to present questions or problems to any counselor by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Staff evaluation of the program indicates counselors now feel comfortable .... and they appreciate the close proximity to teaching personnel and student traffic."16

O'Banion also gives an account of Moraine Valley Community College's plan for decentralizing its student personnel staff. Their college physical facilities are planned to provide a "main street" for students and faculty to meet. Along this main street are educational subdivisions. Where subdivisions intersect main street, "crossroads" occur with facilities for studying, socializing, faculty work areas and student personnel centers. All student data, as well as information concerning job placement, financial aid, student activities, transfer are available at each center.[17]

The student personnel staff of Fulton-Montgomery Community College in Johnstown, New York, organized itself as an academic division, in order to assume a significant role in curriculum development. "As a result of their involvement in the curriculum, student personnel workers now have a better understanding of the problems of faculty teaching in the classroom; and they find that with this new knowledge they can be even more effective in a consulting capacity."[18]

In 1972, O'Banion wrote again of student development programs in the community college. As editor, he assembled writings by twenty authors, all authorities in the junior college student personnel field. One chapter, "Exceptional practices in Community Junior College Student Personnel Programs" was applicable to this research: "Most organizational experimentation is taking place in the area of decentralized counseling services....The student personnel program must be thrust into the heart of the institution - into the curriculum, into the instructional process, into the faculty conclaves, into the decision-making process, and into the community."[19]

The organizational systems of William Rainey Harper Community College (Illinois), Forest Park Community College (Missouri), Moraine Valley Community College (Illinois), Fulton- Montgomery Community College (New York), Santa Fe Junior College (Florida) and El Centro College (Texas) were also described.

To get first-hand, and further information concerning these counseling programs, a letter was written (as attached) to the various colleges. Replies were received from El Centro College, William Rainey Harper Community College, and Forest Park Community College.

El Centro College

> Our organizational concept is called a centralized-liaison pattern. This means simply that all our counselors are physically located in one area of the college, but that their duties and assignments carry them everywhere.
>
> Some time ago we used to be awfully concerned about organizational patterns .... and we still care about them .... but now our concern is not so much for how we are formally organized, as it is for what we are able to do with the human resources available to us. The old argument concerning centralized vs decentralized counseling centers is just that .... old![20]

William Rainey Harper Community College

A copy of the Harper College Counseling Guidelines was received presenting philosophies and operational procedures shared by counselors. An attempt is made in the "Guidelines" to draw together the functions and activities that are applicable to their counseling staff. A copy of their organizational chart is attached. Details of this system were discussed previously in this paper when relating Harvey's article in the Junior College Journal, October, 1967.

Forest Park Community College

> We have found the need for a centralized counseling resource center in which the various departmental or division counselors participate and are available for walk-in counselees and program advising at any time. This facility is manned on a rotating basis with a counselor there for two hours of his/her day.
>
> This room also has a variety of educational and occupational information and transfer information, such as college catalogues and scholarship data.
>
> We finally hired two people just to serve as evening counselors who are not assigned to a division. Another need resulted in the assigning of a counselor to handle specifically the problems of veterans.[21]

A chart attached shows the organizational structure of the student per-

January 17, 1974

Mr. Fred H. Billups,
Coordinator of Counseling Services
Northern Virginia Community College
Annandale Campus
8333 Little River Turnpike
Annandale, Virginia 22003

Dear Dr. Billups:

As a project for the Doctorate at VPI&SU, I am doing research into a decentralized approach to counseling versus the idea of a central location for student personnel services.

Here at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College we have assigned counselors to various divisions and are experiencing a few problems for which I am attempting to find solutions.

I know that you are extremely busy, as we all are, but if you could spend a few minutes to drop me a line answering a few questions, I would be most appreciative. For example: I understand that one or more of your campuses is using the decentralized plan for counseling services. What is your organizational structure? How effective is it? Are there changes you would make, if you were establishing a new community college?

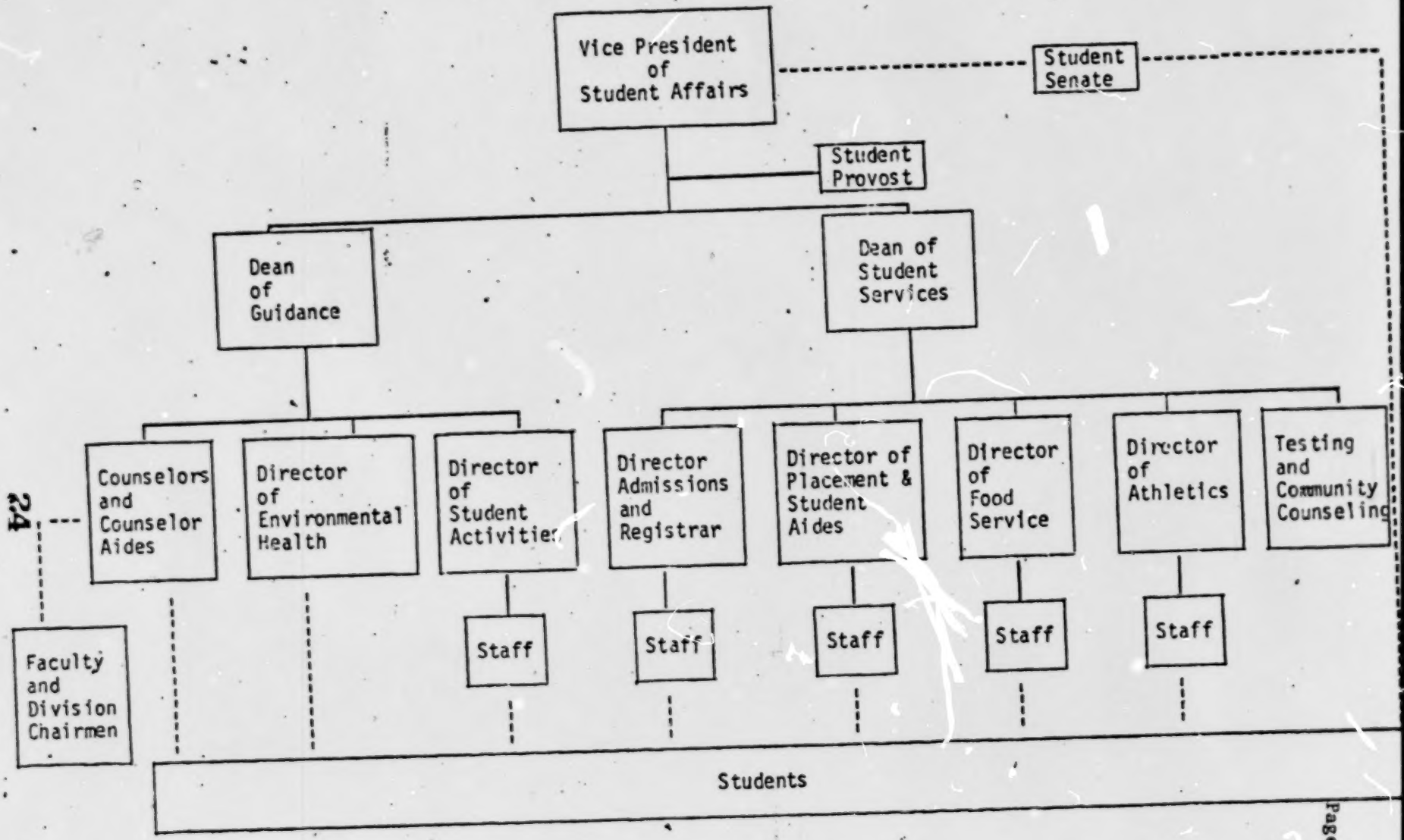
I realize this is a monumental request, but any information you can relay to me will be an important input into my plan of action for our college and my doctoral program.

Sincerely,

Lillian Amburgey
Counselor

LA:l

William Rainey Harper Community College



sonnel services of Forest Park Community College.

Letters were also directed to the community colleges within the Virginia Community College System who are currently using some form of decentralized counseling services. (see page 7a)

Northern Virginia Community College (Alexandria Campus)

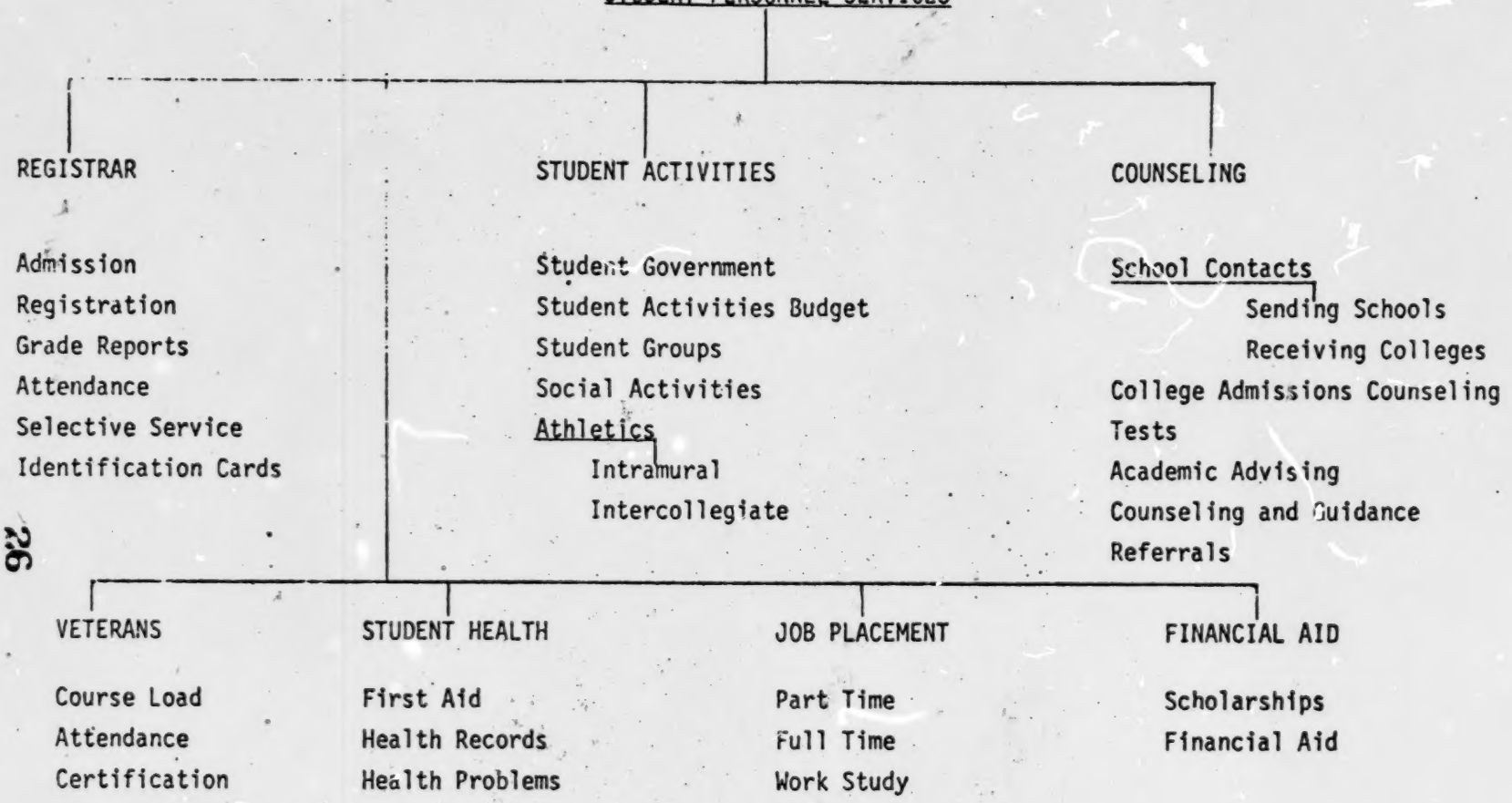
> We do operate on a decentralized counseling plan, with a central counseling service and counselors working within various divisions. Since most faculty office areas and the counseling office are located within one large two-level room, which also includes the library, study areas, and learning resources, and there are few walls and no private offices, the physical setting helps to increase communication. Counselors have desks within the division. The counseling suite is arranged into counseling, work and meeting areas, and does not have a desk or office for each counselor.
>
> Although the counselors spend a good deal of time in the divisions, their responsibility and direction is to counseling services .... The benefits seem to outweigh the problems, which may be in the area of communication amoung counselors, and a certain amount of fragmentation.[22]

Northern Virginia Community College (Annandale Campus)

> We now have only one counselor physically decentralized, but will decentralize two more during the Spring. Our goal is to have a combined centralized and decentralized structure to take maximum advantage of both models. Because of physical space limitations now, counselors with divisional responsibilities spend a scheduled period of time each week in the instructional division working with students and faculty there. These counselors help facilitate the faculty advising system and are on-call for consultation by faculty and students of that division at other times.
>
> Our one decentralized counselor is for the Health and Public Services Technologies Division, and she has a team of four other counselors working with her. Scheduling of her appointments has been a problem. Inadequate telephone support has caused continual problems and current budgetary restrictions will continue to limit us. Control of student records is a major caution in a decentralized system. A major limitation to this system is that nearly all of this counselor's time seems to be consumed in work connected with that division.
>
> There are some problems with communication in the decentralized setup, as I see it, in either decentralized or centralized models, you must have a central career, educational, and personal resources center easily accessible by students, counselors and faculty, perhaps with the Learning Lab in the same building. Another problem deals with how to work out an acceptable contract with the division chairmen as to the counselor's role.[23]

Forest Park Community College

STUDENT PERSONNEL SERVICES



Tidewater Community College

Counselors are physically housed in the divisions with the exception of the Developmental Division. There is, however, a central counseling office which holds all records which are duplicated for each division for their faculty advisors. This office is the focal point for counseling activities. Appointments are made here. Placement and financial aid information is obtained here, as well as testing materials.

Career information is located not only in the central office, but in the office of each divisional counselor.

Counselors check into the counseling center each day. They attend division meetings as well as those initiated by the Coordinator of Counseling. Their biggest problem is lack of help, a common complaint among all the colleges.

Virginia Highlands Community College

Two of the counselors are physically located in academic divisions, and they report directly to their division chairmen. Because of their small student body and physical plant, the location of the Admissions Office is close to the divisions, and duplication of records is now no problem.

There is no center for counseling activities, but there are those in the Admissions Office who handle various counseling functions, such as placement, financial aid, veterans' affairs and part-time students. The size of their student body and the close proximity of all staff members makes their system work now, but as growth takes place, a revised plan of operation will no doubt be instituted.

John Tyler Community College

A counseling center is the hub of all activities, but last year an attempt at decentralized services was made by assigning one counselor to the Developmental Division. Although housed in the counseling center, her time was spent in the division and with the developmental students. She also taught them a specifically designed psychology class which proved most successful.

Neighboring colleges in North Carolina and Maryland have also instituted some programs worthy of note:

Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, N.C.

There is a central counseling office for a student body of 12,000 with a counseling staff of 15. Most of the counselors have offices in the central center, with the exception of the Health and Business counselors, who are physically located in their respective areas.

Record keeping is bad, because they must get folders from A & R. The relationship with faculty members is good, but in the business area, students usually come to see the faculty and not the counselor. Since all of the classes in the Health Division are on one floor, students do see the counselor more frequently.

The biggest disadvantage to this system, as they see it, is: T o whom is the counselor responsible?

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, N.C.

There is a counseling center with a staff trained in counseling, clinical psychology, school counseling and related areas. An occupational-educational library is also maintained here.

This four-year college is mentioned because of their "Peer Counseling Center" which is operated in conjunction with the main center. An innovation, this Peer Counseling Center is run by students for students who are interested in helping others, and who have been especially trained to do so. The service is confidential, and if a problem becomes too technical, referrals are made to professionals.

Prince George Community College, Montgomery, Maryland

Here the Department of Counseling is an academic department under The Director of Human Development who reports to The Dean of Students. In the Counseling Center are housed a psychologist, a medical doctor, educational advisors and counselors. The philosophy in the center is to work with the "total student." They also have a Director of Testing and Advisement, and a Director of Admissions.

Counselors are assigned to the various divisions and physically housed there, but their appointments and all student information come from the counseling center each day. They do not find student folders too necessary,

since all records are on Microfiche.

There is also one full-time counselor assigned to the extension and evening divisions who works from 2:00 to 10:00 P.M. each night. Admissions has its own professional counselors whose duties include recruitment and public relations.

An Office of Veterans' Affairs is established with a counselor for the veterans.

Testing (CGP) is done by the Office of Testing and Advisement. Results are taken directly to the high schools for interpretation.

There are faculty advisors, and walk-ins may see counselors any time, any place. If a folder is needed, it is readily available through the counseling department.

The feedback indicates that faculty, counselors and students are pleased with this arrangement, but counselors are employed knowing what their duties will be in such an organizational structure. Each counselor teaches a Human Potential Seminar (values clarification, goal setting, etc.). Much work is done with faculty and counseling staff in communication labs, work shops, etc. for staff development.

Monroe, 1972, while attempting to show a Profile of The Community College, quotes Blocker and Richardson, 1968, whose statements are valid today:

> Attaching counselors to the teaching departments will not convert teachers who are unsympathetic to counseling. The full acceptance of counseling by both the students and faculty will come only as the community college gives full and equal status to the personnel services staff, and as the faculty becomes composed of teachers who find the community college a preferred institution in which to teach.[24]

Monroe continues: "In the past, counseling experienced much resistance from faculty members on whom they must rely for referrals and information. Various efforts have been made to overcome this resistance by attaching

counselors to the teaching departments or divisions over many different areas on campus. However, the counselors remain responsible to the Director of Personnel Services."[25]

As noted there are almost as many different organizational patterns as their are community colleges, even among those with a system of decentralized counseling. Brawer, 1968, made an observation as follows:

> In the past few years probably no concept has caught the fancy of educators so much as innovation. Simultaneously, it has become an intriguing challenge and an excuse for instituting changes, a way of spending money, and a device for appeasing those who are disenchanted with old systems and are striving to establish a new order. The aura surrounding the term has charged it with a panacea-like quality. Such unqualified acceptance may concern some individuals, but many others consider innovation to be the answer to all educational problems and so ignore the importance of selection, evaluation and longitudinal studies.[26]

Matson, 1972, was aware that further analysis of all data must be made before long range conclusions or recommendations can be made. She states: "The data appear to present evidence that the student personnel functions are well established in two-year colleges and are receiving at least minimally adequate financial support. The movement within the student personnel area toward a closer working relationship with the institutional program has not developed great momentum .... but new and better ways of bridging the existing gap between the Student Personnel and Instructional Areas are being explored.[27]

B. Lamar Johnson, 1964, quotes James B. Conant, who even then was aware of the dilema of student personnel services: "It would not be too much to say that on the success or failure of our guidance program hangs, in all probability, the success or failure of our system of public education."[28]

In spite of the pessimism of Robinson, Raines and McConnell, strides have been made towards improvement of guidance services to students in

the community colleges, perhaps more so than in the four-year schools. This might be credited to the nature of the student bodies in the two-year institutions. These students "cry-out" for more and more personal contacts with someone who cares, who is easily found and readily available for listening, problem solving, etc. Dispersement of services to these students throughout the college, whether in divisions, in the lounge, through peer counselors, or telephone hot lines is essential to their progress and achievement. Decentralized counseling would appear to be one method that is achieving a modicum of success. A workable model for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and its Student Personnel Services will complete this project.

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A PROPOSAL TO MODIFY A PRESENT SYSTEM

An academic year has passed since this project was undertaken. There have been adjustments, traumas and excitement within the staff of student personnel services which is dedicated to the idea of decentralized counseling activities.

Garrison, 1968, made the statement: "It is no longer the traditional ball game: the rules, the players, the locale are all being changed, improvised, made over by the driving dynamics of a national policy that calls for education-for-everyone-as-far-as-he-can-go."[1] If student personnel workers are to meet the challenge of assisting all who come through the open doors to obtain an education "as-far-as-he-can-go," then they must continually strive to offer services which not only meet the needs of the students and community, but the needs of their own college administration and staff as well.

The original project survey of faculty, students, counselors, coordinators, division chairmen and administrators made in the Fall of 1973, indicated an almost unanimous support for a decentralized system of counseling services. There were, however, further statements made by some, particularly division chairmen, such as:

"I like it, but ....."

"It would be better if ....."

A follow-up visit was made to those originally surveyed for any additional suggestions they might have as a result of their experiences of the past year. They made these positive comments:

1. We <u>do</u> now have trust between the faculty and counselors.

2. Decentralization has given students immediate access to counselors.

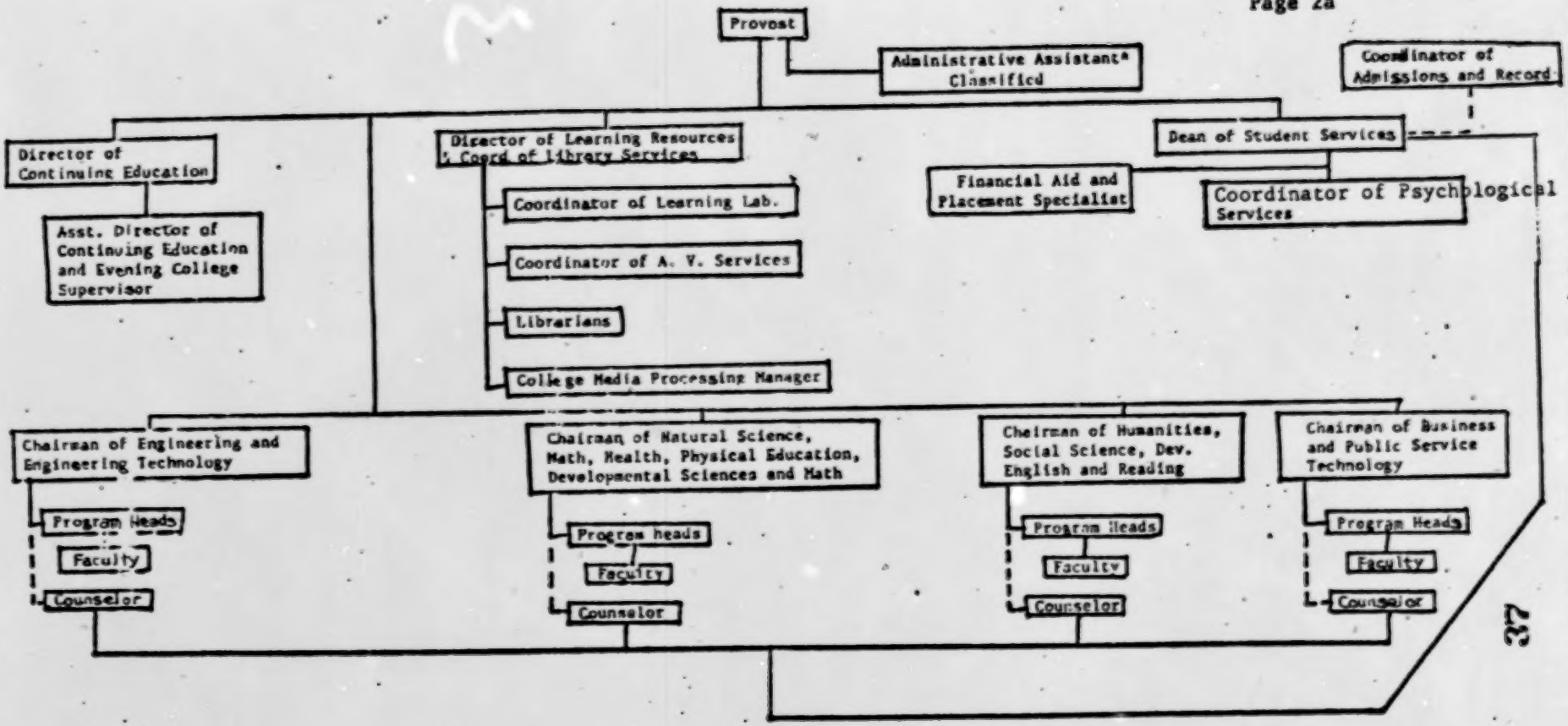
Their negative comments concerned excessive record keeping by counselors, too much isolationism between the counseling staff members, and the counselors now serving two masters, the college, and their division.

The evidence produced by the survey seemed to indicate that the following problems needed to be resolved, if the decentralized system of counseling services was to be completely successful:

1. There was a need to revise the administrative structure of student personnel services.
2. Excessive clerical work by counselors limited their student and community contacts.
3. There was a need for a counseling information center easily accessible to all.
4. The role of the counselor, as perceived by counselors themselves, administrators, faculty and students, was an ambiguous one.
5. There was a limited budget which did not adequately support counseling activities.
6. There was a need for a program of professional staff development.
7. There was central authority with the Dean of Student Services, rather than decentralized authority, preferred by some.
8. Counselor assignments, because of size and differing programs among the divisions, were unequal.

The new student personnel services organizational chart has been designed to promote harmony and to draw together the functions and activities that are applicable to the counseling staff of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. It will be noted that counselors still operate under central authority, but now report to the Dean of Student Services with a dotted line to the division chairmen.

In a decentralized structure, the need for coordination of counseling is not as great, since each counselor has varied duties within each division.


Provost
Administrative Assistant^a Classified
Coordinator of Admissions and Record
Director of Continuing Education
Asst. Director of Continuing Education and Evening College Supervisor
Director of Learning Resources & Coord of Library Services
Coordinator of Learning Lab.
Coordinator of A. V. Services
Librarians
College Media Processing Manager
Dean of Student Services
Financial Aid and Placement Specialist
Coordinator of Psychological Services
Chairman of Engineering and Engineering Technology
Program Heads
Faculty
Counselor
Chairman of Natural Science, Math, Health, Physical Education, Developmental Sciences and Math
Program heads
Faculty
Counselor
Chairman of Humanities, Social Science, Dev. English and Reading
Program Heads
Faculty
Counselor
Chairman of Business and Public Service Technology
Program Heads
Faculty
Counselor

A new position has been created, Coordinator of Psychological Services, which will include testing, psychology courses, and later institutional research. A clinical psychologist will be added to assist with the testing program, teach psychology and handle the referrals from counselors and faculty for those students needing professional help. The Coordinator for these services will report directly to the Dean of Student Services, as will the counselors, and the position of coordinator of counseling services has been eliminated.

A further suggestion might be that faculty advisement, an important function at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, be added to the duties of the Coordinator of Psychological Services. Advisement should be a coordinated effort of the entire administration and staff, but there must be one individual whose responsibility is to plan, synthesize and follow the program constantly to make certain it is effective.

The admissions office will be a central operation, but consideration might be given to a division between admissions and records. A student is initially admitted, and his papers processed in the admissions office. Correspondence concerning his file and admittance into a curriculum should be handled by para professionals in this office. A check-out system for the student files can be inaugurated to permit counselors to obtain records on new students immediately without having to wait interminably for such records to be duplicated for each division.

As soon as a student file is complete and he has been enrolled for one quarter, his records can be transferred to the records office and placed on Micro-fiche. Each counselor could be furnished a reader and a complete set of Micro-fiche displays providing past course and demographic data on active and inactive students. The Micro-fiche can be updated at the begining of each quar-

ter An investigation has revealed that the cost of purchasing readers and displays is relatively low (approximately $150.00 per reader, and about $50.00 for a set of displays) in comparison with the cost of duplicating records and providing clerical help to do so. A faculty advisor may have access to the Micro-fiche displays with his division counselor, or may check out a file from the records office.

Admittance into several programs does require a personal interview with the division counselor and the program head. Once this has taken place, and the student accepted, admissions should be notified to send out the letter of acceptance, thus eliminating this admission function now handled by some counselors.

Transcript evaluation could be another function of the admissions office (in the absence of a Dean of Instruction). In most cases it is routine, and could be handled by a para professional specifically trained. The evaluation could then be sent to the division chairman for his signature and approval. If there are questionable courses, the program head may be consulted. When all is in order, the transcript can be returned to the admissions office for placement in the student's file. A letter should be sent to the student notifying him of his course standing at that time as a result of his transcript appraisal.

Eleven two-year colleges were researched, among which were four community colleges in the Virginia System. All of these had decentralized counseling in some form. All recommended a counseling center as a hub for college counseling and dispersal of general information..

A counseling information center at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Parham Road Campus, could be located in the large entrance foyer of the building, and adjacent to the student lounge area. Students must pass here entering and leaving the building, and entering and leaving their lounge. Because the center is not a part of the original specifications, the Dean of Finance was consulted.

Movable partitions could be installed and numerous desks, file cabinets and bookshelves be provided with locks to prevent theft at little cost to the College (since many are already available in the inventory). This should be a rather open area to invite students in seeking answers to many questions:

1. General college information - New students, as well as those currently enrolled have many questions of genuine concern to them. Division counselors are not always available because of interviews, class schedules, meetings, etc. An information center with a counselor always available with ready answers is a necessity. A daily college program could be posted here for students and faculty pick-up.

2. Veterans' problems - Veterans need tender-loving-care from the moment they enter the college door until they finish their course work, whether it be one course or a degree program. Their problems are many: legal papers, financial aid, employment, adjustment to college, tutoring, personal problems, medical assistance. They must have a "home base" and a friend they can count on to be available who can sympathize, empathise, and above all be knowledgeable concerning their rights as a veteran. The veteran's counselor could be located here.

3. Occupational-educational information - A central location is necessary for students to browse through the excellent material available now. College catalogues, occupational handbooks and guides, literature from business and industry, local information concerning Richmond and its cultural and educational opportunities should be on hand.

4. Referral source - Referrals can be made from here to counselors in divisions where specific program information is available. Students should be directed to division counselors for academic advising and program planning.

5. Student aides - Using students as tutors and peer counselors has proven most successful in many community colleges, as well as four-year colleges and universities. A program using peer aides in recruitment, tutoring, registration, orientation, receptionists and clerks in the information center, tour guides, maintenance of career files, etc., was initiated at Virginia Western Community College to expand campus services to students. An extensive program has been developed for the selection and training of these "student aides" (which is available upon request). Their program has been funded and could easily be adapted to this college. Student aides could also be located in the counseling information center.

The counseling information center should include a professional counselor who would direct the activities of the center. An evening counselor should also be employed who could perhaps be on a part-time basis, from say 5:00 to 10:00

o'clock each evening. Until the budget allows for an additional staff member in counseling to maintain the proposed information center, division counselors could spend a portion of each day in the center on a rotating basis, which would enable all counselors to function as generalists as well as specialists.

Jones, 1970, states that "much of the current disenchantment with counseling in our junior colleges appears to be related to the problem of determining what constitutes the proper role of counselors . . . .Counselors can perform significant and worthwhile services for students only if allowed to do so. Educators in positions of responsibility should endeavor to provide maximum opportunity for counselors to counsel students."[2]

The role of the counselor at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College has been refined and now reads as follows:

Functions and Duties:

Divisional Duties:

(1) Providing individual and/or group counseling services to students for the purpose of assisting them in self-understanding, setting and attaining appropriate personal, educational, and vocational goals.

(2) Assisting students in planning, developing, and accepting adequate career goals.

(3) Arranging for the administration of intelligence, aptitude, achievement, personality, and interests tests and inventories and interpreting results to the students tested. Interpreting student test results to instructors, administrators, parents, and employers consistent with college policy.

(4) Interpreting the counseling program to teachers, students and the community.

(5) Identifying and providing counseling services for students with physical, emotional, and academic handicaps and, when needed, coordinating referral of students to specialized individuals and agencies.

(6) Identifying exceptional students and assisting teachers in establishing a program to fit individual needs and differences.

(7) Developing, coordinating, and making available information for occupational and educational planning, and assisting in examining and solving personal problems involved.

General College Duties:

(1) Teaching College Orientation courses and psychology as needed.

(2) Assisting in the development, improvement, and implementation of the College's Orientation programs.

(3) Assisting in the general college recruitment efforts; i.e., high school visitation, college nights, etc.

(4) Assisting in the college registration periods.

(5) Participating in in-service training activities.

(6) Assisting in the campus's "walk-in" counseling center.

It will be noted that the establishment of a records system and its supervision is absent from the divisional duties, which certainly does away with a monumental clerical duty now assumed by counselors.

Hinko, 1971, in his national report on the status of counseling services in large community colleges established that "more than anything else, however, the two factors which tend to hinder the overall effectiveness of the counseling program in the large community college are lack of sufficient personnel and the lack of an adequate operating budget."[3]

Funds should be allocated to each counselor to provide for the purchase of basic tools for operation, such as career development manuals and texts; attendance at professional meetings; memberships in professional organizations.

Funds should also be available for the purchase of the Micro-fiche equipment to alleviate the voluminous time-consuming record-keeping that now is handled by each division counselor.

The funds must include a telephone hookup with the division secretary, so that appointments can be handled here, and routine calls diverted from the counselor who might be interviewing a counselee. This telephone system might

also be handled through the counseling information center, monitored by an aide, with lines to the individual counseling offices.

Staff development is a perplexing problem when counselors are decentralized. Meetings are difficult to schedule, and operational procedures become the order-of-the-day, rather than planned programs for staff enrichment. The Dean of Student Services can negotiate with the division chairmen for time slots during the year, and assign to members of his staff the responsibility for sponsoring activities such as:

a. career development workshops
b. communications workshops
c. films for case consultations
d. human sexuality workshops
e. human potential staff discussions
f. transactional analysis workshops
g. health related workshops (discussion groups on drugs, v.d., weight control, physical fitness, etc.)
h. workshops on social issues (black-white, male-female, discrimination, democracy, etc.)
i. discussions on the community college student (who are they? Where do they come from? What do they want? Where are they going? How are their needs best met?)

The most difficult problem to resolve at the college, is the centralized control versus the decentralized authority. There is a diversity of divisions, and the division chairmen should participate in establishing the counselor's role and workload in helping to meet the goals of the division. If there is to be a student personnel services organization of the college, however, then it must be recognized that the counselors are also members of this organization. The Dean of Student Services and the counselors, together with the division chairmen, should work together as a <u>team</u> to designate the role of <u>each</u> counselor appropriate to the division and the college. In no way, must the role of the division counselor be construed as that of assistant to the division chairman, adjunct faculty, full-time recruiter, registrar, division clerk, initialer of forms, instead of Professional Counselor.

Webster defines counseling as "deliberation together." Counselors need time, funds and administrative consent to "deliberate together" with students, faculty and the administration in the pursuit of institutional and personal goals.

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
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